



2023 Vidya Gaem Awards
Award Speeches

Speeches from the 2023 Vidya Gaem Awards
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Least Worst Award for least worst game of the year
WINNER: Baldur's Gate 3

OH HO HO HO, /v/, you did it, you picked the game everybody else picked, congratulations! I'd tell you all to go to hell, but you already do in an optional questline!

Larian has been lurking around our awards, getting a third place here, a fifth place there but never quite making the cut for a proper award, until now. Baldur's Gate 3 was Larian using all the lessons they got from their own Original Sin games and applying them to one of the most iconic settings in classic CRPGs.

It's not easy to spend 150 hours with the same setting and cast of characters, but Baldur's Gate 3 meets the challenge like any good dungeon master would: By making your decisions matter. Usually via party dynamics and how you choose to interact with your fellow band of infected allies, and how they choose to react in turn.

Speaking of DND, Baldur's Gate uses that familiar 5e gameplay you may not love, but definitely know how to use.

Baldur's Gate 3 stands in clear opposition to Forspoken, being a game that was developed with direct contact with its players, made by people that had a clear vision about what they liked and, above all, just wanted to make a good-ass game. 60 dollars, no microtransactions, no battlepasses, no extra paid shit, just an honest-to-Baal, straight to the point, charming, engaging sword-and-sorcery RPG that just about everybody found a reason to love.

Here's hoping for projects like this to continue to grow and fill in the space AAA games have been struggling to even keep up for years, crying online about having to meet standards of quality that used to be the norm less than two decades ago! Let's face it: the future is indie.

Most Hated Award for most hated game of the year

WINNER: Forspoken

We've been noticing a trend amongst our most hated winners. Sure, they're no fun to play, but there's a certain apathy built into them. As if the developers made a plate of chocolate chip cookies, and followed the recipe exactly, but forgot the most important ingredient: Love.

Forspoken has some aspects that could be passable, like the parkour and the graphics, but it's all spoiled by the terrible taste the whole game leaves in our mouth when all the other bland factors join together into a hard chalky mess.

It represents Square Enix's absurd commitment to pander to the west in the laziest and most boring way, when nobody was asking them to in the first place. The more they involve the corporate office, the worse the result, and it's been this way as far back as the Crystal Tools debacle with FF13. Final Fantasy as a franchise was never consistent, and for many that was a selling point. The fans never knew what was coming next. Sure it didn't always hit, but it came from a place of genuine enthusiasm. Some Japanese fuck who'd been sitting on their fanfic for twenty years, waiting for technology to finally catch up.

Costing over 100 million dollars, it's sad to see Forspoken as such a gigantic financial risk, but not a creative one. Who was this story for? Was it ever "for" anyone? Did it start as a lifeless product meant to check boxes, or were the hard edges filed away through dozens of international board meetings and Zoom calls?

How many more Forspoken and Saints Rows can they afford, now that the tech industry is in shambles and investors are pulling their money away from gaming? Forspoken is only here because it's the latest in a string of disjointed constructions by a handcuffed or uninvested creative team. Don't call it a cause, call it a symptom.

Haptic Feedback Award for best gameplay

WINNER: Pizza Tower

It's like Wario Land 4 decided to throw a pizza-party, much like the titular chunky italian hero tearing through walls and enemies with unbridled gusto; One savvy piggy decided to take this gameplay mechanic and absolutely floor the gas, taking his own fat Italian bastard with a vendetta against stillness and giving him speed and endurance that would make Sonic blush.

Whether you're the one in control or watching someone else play, seeing Peppino wreak havoc through the stages feels straight out of a cartoon. It's chaotic, It's hilarious, and it's a total joyride.

The secret sauce here is controls tighter than a can of anchovies, you can shift on a dime and maintain your speed to keep hauling ass, And you'll need that momentum as each level becomes increasingly demanding and complex.

It's Wario Land. It's Flicky. It's all that and a clove of garlic! Get funky, and get smashing.

Press X To Win The Award for worst gameplay

WINNER: Starfield

How do you do, fellow kids? It's me, Rob Broward, here to show you an exciting world. Many of them, in fact! Dozens! Bajillions! Just a hop, skip, and ten loading screens away.

From the makers of Fallout 3, aka "Oblivion with Guns," we're happy to introduce Skyrim with Guns. In Spaaaaaace!

Featuring less than one half of the weapon variety as our previous game, Fallout 4, this tighter and more focused experience ought to make you feel an extraordinary level of boredom as you cross our barren landscapes to our copy-pasted bases!

Hell, you can't even kill anybody important, so there's no real consequences. What do you think this is, New Vegas?

And for all you 'speed runners,' make sure your jetpack can be activated by both space bar and one other key for maximum performance! Everything's better with jetpacks!

Leave your basement, right now, and ask your mother to buy you The Elder Scrolls: Starfield. You won't regret it!

Finnegan's Quake Award for best writing
WINNER: Baldur's Gate 3

Writing a good story for an RPG isn't just about crafting memorable characters, a compelling plot and punchy dialogue; it's about committing to making every choice and every action meaningful. Baldur's Gate 3 revels in its commitment to predicting the diverse and often insane things player's will do and then preparing the companions, NPCs, and even the world itself to respond.

Who would have thought that talking to a strange ox in Act 1 would gain you an unexpected ally for the final boss in Act 3? Or that giving an old woman hiking in the mountains an egg in her trying time would directly lead to her violent death?

The fact that the game has so much unique dialogue to account for a wide array of bizzare and seemingly unconnected choices, like which class you are, which companions are currently in your party, and whether or not you left Astarion inside the monastery before triggering the trap protecting a magical weapon-

(cue clip: "What in the sweet hells were you thinking? I was RIGHT THERE!")

-speaks to how much effort Larian invested in its writing, and it shows. Sometimes quantity is its own quality, and with Baldur's Gate 3 you get both.

Admittedly, the game did have a bit of a weak ending at launch, but - credit where its due - Larian addressed that months later with a patch that majorly overhauled the epilogue system.

Between the characters, the world, and the story, Baldur's Gate 3 is the D&D campaign you wish your GM could run.

Pottery Award for worst writing
WINNER: Forspoken

How on Earth do you fuck up an isekai? Anime publishers are buying up rights to this derivative garbage from literal whos on Narou and serving it up every week as disposable slop for a braindead audience. The difference here being, chiefly, that it's derivative garbage by committee. It felt like something stitched together from tropes and cliches taken from a long forgotten era of pop culture, which makes sense because it was a team of 4 western writers raised on 80's movies, who then passed it off to a Japanese team who didn't know any better.

The lack of passion in the storytelling isn't helped by our own protagonist's apathy with her own situation. I could go on about all the stupid quips our protagonist and her cuff companion make, about how she completely refuses to be empathetic towards the people that help her, about how barren, generic and boring the world the game takes place in is - so generic in fact that I can't even remember its name. Frey isn't having any fun 20 hours into the game, which is a huge problem because she's supposed to be our window into this strange and "fascinating" world. If she can't muster any enthusiasm about her own story, don't expect the player to act any different. Hopefully soon, this type of writing becomes as dated as the references it makes.

/vr/ Award for best game of 1993

WINNER: Doom

1993 was a year filled with great games, and it was in early December that ID Software gifted us with Doom.

Owing to the successes of smooth-scrolling Commander Keen and blasting nazis in Wolfenstein 3D, people were inclined to believe the many over-the-top promises made in Doom's over-the-top press release.

In it, John Carmack proclaimed his previous coding efforts to be primitive by comparison, citing enhanced controls and gameplay, more detailed, mutable environments, dynamic lighting, and ONLINE MULTIPLAYER.

Id also requested that players "please make the necessary preparations," and elaborated no further.

Blessedly, their players were right to believe. ID followed through on every last bit of it; and eager DOOMers, after ransacking one poor university's servers in a frenzy, were graced with John Romero's pioneering efforts at creating believable spaces: four pillars, some questionably blue carpet, and a pile of gore, suggesting the carnage ahead. Once players had mowed their way through the first level, Romero was there again, with a level timer- taunting that he had, in fact, done it faster. This particular butterfly flap would ruin the lives of many of our more impressionable fast-masters.

Doom would have been a legendary game by these merits alone- some argue that Doom is responsible for kicking off not only speedrunning but online esports as well; but hacker-at-heart Carmack had seen what burgeoning modders had done with Wolfenstein 3D, and made sure Doom was as friendly to their efforts as possible. Thanks to that final step, Doom truly has become Eternal.

Anywhere, any time, you, too, can experience hell on earth. If you haven't already, go play DOOM. It'll run on a fucking lawnmower.

WarioWare Award for best game of 2003
WINNER: The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

This is but one of the games of which the people speak...

Long ago, there existed a franchise from which some of the greatest games of all time emerged, blessed with epic stories, innovative gameplay, and memorable music.

But one day, a trailer of great evil was shown for a new entry. With its whimsical, cel-shaded artstyle, fans of the series cried out and spread darkness across the internet. But then, when all hope had died, and the hour of doom seemed at hand...

...the game was released.

Featuring a magical baton and a talking boat, the series received a breath of fresh air. This game was known as The Wind Waker. Tales of the game's quality were passed from publication to publication until it became legend...

But then, a day came when rumors of a darker, grittier game spread amongst the fans... But that is a game for another award show.

What became of the series? Why don't you wait for Least Worst and find out?

Through word of mouth and re-releases, The Wind Waker has found a second wind. Like the Hero of Time himself, it took a bold step into the unknown, and many of its innovations have become customary to include in future entries. Entries which aspire to tell their own epic tales of Skyward Swords and the Faces of Evil. It's only a matter of time before some brave new developer shows courage like the hero of legend...

Ricardo Milos Award for best representation of men
WINNER: Pizza Tower

Oh shit. I'm sorry. Were you expecting some cute guy? Well, you were right. In fact, we've got a whole smorgasbord of big guys for you. Hot and ready straight to your door. In 30 minutes or less. Come take a bite out of the hot, steamy men of Pizza Tower. They're just dripping with hard, scrumptious goodness. That's a cut above the rest of those other guys.

Pepperman's delicious and oh so spicy. The Vigilante's got a hair trigger like a jackrabbit. Gustavo ain't just all dough. He'll show you a supreme time. Pillar John's a bit crusty, but he's a guy with a serious crunch. So thick. And there's no faking everyone's favorite Italian sausage man, Peppino. He's got a big load of your favorite toppings, ready to stick it to your hunger for a good time.

Are you waiting for a formal invitation? Roll on over and get your crust stuffed.

Plot and Backstory Award for best representation of women
WINNER: Atelier Ryza 3

Gust keeps cookin' up new ways for us to appreciate the Ryza games. Over this robust video game trilogy, the titular Ryza has shaped up into a well-rounded woman.

All of her assets are on display here: Her extensive knowledge of alchemy, her kindness, her charm... and as we explore her huge tracts of land, we can't help but appreciate how she's grown and how she has captured our... hearts, with her quirky charm.

And what talent she possesses! Civic engineering, economics, fighting off an extra dimensional invasion.. all in a day's work for our perky protagonist.

And who could complain about this presumed final entry, with all of her old friends and allies joining in on the fun?

The past three games have been a long and satisfying ride, and while she's already called a cab and left for work, there'd certainly be no complaints if our alluring alchemist had us coming again.

Pixels Are Xirt Award for most pretentious indie game
WINNER: Goodbye Volcano High

So you're probably expecting a long-winded speech or something.

But you know who won in the end. A fan game releasing 26 months before the original, with KO-OP banning anyone stupid enough to name drop it. And some random writer coming out of retirement just to post a hit piece on Kotaku. All because of 4chan. All because the wrong people made the right game.

Look, Snoot Game wasn't on the ballot this year, and we're not exactly an impartial source. But if there was no Snoot Game, we would have never graduated Volcano High. You got two universes. Two worlds to get lost in, make fanart of, have fun playing or to talk shit about. You guys got two cakes, man. You won.

The best thing to do is to play both games, even though one wants to be petty and jealous and make you take a side. But there's plenty to love elsewhere, tonight, in Volcano High.

CRAZEDJEW

You know, you guys really have to get over yourselves. Jeez, talk about snooty.

EVERYONE ELSE

Shut the fuck up!

IP Twist Award for best implementation of an old franchise
WINNER: Armored Core VI: Fires of Rubicon

One fucking heavy robo gun in one hand, a can of whoopass clenched in the other, Armored Core boosts back into the spotlight.

We were always destined to see this series return, but to think we were gifted with the level of production FromSoft is known for these days is just a treat.

Every element that makes up Fires of Rubicon is honed with a razer sharp edge, from its stunning visuals to the design of the mechs, handled with care and attention to detail, each one feeling worthy enough to get its own anime spin-off.

The voice acting and sound design reach a new level, taking every step to synchronize you into the drama and action. Just as previous titles from Armored Core, the music motivates you as the Apex Predator but with intense techno and sizzling synth.

Fires of Rubicon graces fans with nostalgia, and newcomers with probably one the most in-depth mech simulators in recent history, making the player really feel the complexity of the mech building, its intricacies and quirks, all culminating in you thrashing thrashing them on massive battlefields. And, of course, the Moonlight Sword yet again, the cherry on top of this return to greatness.

Don Miguel Award for best RPG Maker game of all time
WINNER: Yume Nikki

Every game nowadays has a plethora of guides that hold your hand and wipe your ass all the way from the main menu to the credits screen. But when you boot up Yume Nikki, you are given only a short list of instructions, and that's it. Everything else you must figure out on your own. Something like this could easily have been dismissed as horribly pretentious, but when Yume Nikki was first released back in 2004, it was practically a novelty.

Yume Nikki was already noteworthy for completely ignoring RPG Maker's built-in combat system, but what made the game memorable was its adamant refusal to explain itself. I'm not entirely sure how Aztec Rave Monkey fits into Kikiyama's personal understanding of reality...

DAVID LEAN

Elaborate on that, if you would...

DAVID LYNCH

No.

... but hey, who are we to judge?

The game offers no answers, and so it was left up to players to derive their own meaning. This has helped keep the game relevant nearly 20 years later. Sharing your discoveries, learning what you may have missed, one could argue that the players are just as responsible for making the game what it is today as its reclusive creator.

The only way to discover what Yume Nikki is all about, and why it's the best RPG Maker game of all time, is to play it for yourself. But do yourself a favor and go in blind. Perhaps it will all make sense to you, or maybe truth is only in dreams.

While you're still here, get the bicycle or you're gonna go bananas. I'm not fucking joking, just take this door, it's right here, it lets you move hella fast.

Re-Bastard Award for best Remake or Remaster of 2023

WINNER: System Shock

Oh, what a road this has been. Let's make a quick rundown of the game's trajectory, shall we? The game's rights were stuck in a weird limbo, owned by an insurance company after the dissolution of Looking Glass Studios. Night Dive scooped them up and tested the market with re-releases, and that gave them the confidence they needed to try for something more.

After their relatively successful kickstarter campaign, the game needed to be completely rewritten to move from Unity to Unreal, which forced them into a hiatus and requiring more funds. But after 8 years of uncertainty, it was finally our chance to reunite.

The game just feels like what a remake should be, taking the original game, improving on its technical limitations and adding its own spin to the gameplay and aesthetics. The devs clearly cared about recapturing what people enjoyed about the original, but wanted to take it further than they could have 29 years ago. Using the laser rapier has never felt so good! Ah, but you get my point. That said, regarding the "all remakes are bad" crowd. Let's see how far you'll nominate the original in next year's /vr/ award.

AESTHETICS Award for best visual aesthetics
WINNER: Hi-Fi Rush

In a huge departure from their previous grimdark titles, Tango Gameworks decided to go for a stylish cartoony look in their newest game. The cel-shading and character design bring back memories from classic games from the sixth gen, which probably isn't a coincidence since the soundtrack itself is blatantly nostalgic for the same era. A punk-rock response to the graphical arms race still going on to this day.

But even looking past the cel-shading, the one thing in which this game goes truly above and beyond is the animation. The game includes a metronome to help you stay in rhythm, but you won't even need it. When idling, Chai will snap his fingers to the rhythm of the soundtrack. All the attacks from both you and the enemies happen with the beat. And even props and background elements in the levels bump according to the rhythm. The whole world literally moves with the groove like one giant living music video.

And then there's the cutscenes. At key points they'll switch up from in-game animation to an actual 2D cartoon straight out of Saturday morning. And when you finally land the finishing blow on certain bossfights, the game will give you a stylized splashscreen in that same cartoony style. This really is the kind of game that, had it released on the PS2 back in 2005, would have been the 11-year-old (You)'s favorite game of all time.

Friday Night Frights Award for scariest game of 2023
WINNER: World of Horror

Okay /v/, let's address the elephant in the room:

Yes, World of Horror does draw obvious inspiration from the works of Junji Ito. But as we all know, how pretty a game is has nothing to do with how good it is... or how scary. That said, World of Horror's aesthetic is doing a lot of heavy lifting, and the game clearly leans into the old adage of 'what you don't see is scarier than what you do'.

In a year filled with boats, bunkers and daycares, World of Horror gives us something new through a uniquely nostalgic spin on the roguelike: combining a 1-bit manga aesthetic, a minimalistic soundtrack, and mechanics harkening back to old-school adventure games. And leave it to a dentist to know how to build an atmosphere of dread: watching the cast of oddball characters encounter increasingly bizarre horrors in a city slowly becoming more twisted makes survival feel that much more daunting, to say nothing of actually solving the mystery. The game gives you all the time you need to make your decisions, but only an eternity to regret them.

That this game was basically developed by one person from /agdg/ should, on its own, put the rest of the industry to shame. That the game is actually scary, and fun, should put them in the grave.

Diamond in the Rough Award for best game nobody played
WINNER: Bayonetta Origins: Cereza and the Lost Demon

PlatinumGames has had a rough time these last few years with lackluster releases and Bayo 3 coming out to our collective indifference, we didn't expect this kind of strange prequel game to be so appealing!

Cereza and the Lost Demon is a departure from the current fast paced action games Platinum has been known for, bringing us back to the kind of style and atmosphere Clover Studio games used to be famous for: taking what they did to Japanese ink paintings in Okami and applying it to a Celtic-inspired fairytale aesthetic.

Still on that idea of a slower paced game, it seems like PlatinumGames experiments with two simultaneous characters finally came to fruition here, by slowing down the combat and focusing more on exploration and puzzles.

Cereza and the Lost Demon isn't just a good Bayonetta game, but a game that is enjoyable for anybody looking for a unique and gorgeous experience.

A fitting book-end to the "current" PlatinumGames, with their change in direction and Kamiya leaving, this might be the last chapter for this type of old-school style game. Looking forward to the new Platinum though, let's hope they never lose their luster.

Hindenburg Award for biggest technical blunder

WINNER: Starfield

What a shocking surprise! The game is poorly optimized, who would have guessed?

Maybe we should have taken the hint when Todd Howard told us to "Just get better hardware lol" even though it can't even run on the dedicated consoles it was designed for.

Let's talk about the Creation Engine 2 that, despite Bethesda slapping a number "2" in its name, still at its core has the exact same issues since it was used to make Morrowind. That's over 20 years now of working with an engine that is held together by duct tape and mods.

Oh, the mods... the famous "mods will fix it" attitude is exactly the reason why Bethesda never cared to put some actual effort into their software.

It's hilarious how this giant company, who had all the time in the world to copy No Man's Sky, opted for "explorable" planets that are procedurally generated and barren, or limited to the modern equivalent of a village in Skyrim.

And the NPCs of course, they like to clip out of their clothes, or clip outside the level geometry. When you're having a conversation with them, they don't have the patience (or the programming) to stay still. And don't you dare pick up that basketball next to a civilian, or you'll be shot on the spot for trying to murder them with it.

And we can add all the other smaller stuff like thousands of polygons for a single mug, wonky controls and dubious coding in general. Basically, it just doesn't work and it deserves this year's award without a doubt.

Hate Machine Award for crimes against gaming

WINNER: Unity

Game publishers have always been blood-sucking parasites, but dealing with them was often reserved for the end of the development process, allowing you to make the game of your dreams in peace. We live in a new era, where these vampires now intend to own and exploit the means of production, as well, trapping you in a game of their own before it's barely even started.

Unity has spent many years digging its tentacles into business and college campuses to establish itself as the de facto game engine across the United States, if not the world.

Once it was decided Unity was too big to fail, the CEO, John Riccietello, concluded Unity's massive wealth and influence were not enough, and established a fee per install of each unity game.

A fee structure so ridiculous, and so easy to exploit, he was hoping the community would accept his calculated concessions after the heat died down.

But Joey Rigatoni has once again underestimated the outrage he would cause amongst the communities he was claiming to serve.

This repugnant snake managed to ruin Electronic Arts, win it two consecutive Golden Poo Awards for Worst Company of the Year, then land safely and comfortably as the head of Unity, where he once again overplayed his hand by pulling the rug from under his customers and setting independent development back by 5 years. An unforced error by a man who yet again deemed himself too big to fail

The rapid migration by these developers to Unreal, Godot, Game Maker, etc., has only served to highlight the level of dissatisfaction that was boiling up before this fee was even thought to exist, and served as both a convenient excuse to move on, and the final straw. Congratulations, Unity. You have fucked around, and you have found out.

Silicon Valley Bank Award for most Notorious Layoffs
WINNER: Unity

You got laid off too huh? We're all just cattle to them, they fatten us up with the promises of moving to a new land, ingraining ourselves in the company culture, before gutting us two weeks after the hire.

Don't you see what they're doing? Those seniors up there isolate us into little teams, so that when those firing squads come around, we'll have no one to speak on our behalf.

You know why they do it right? Anything to please those investors, they love seeing that big number go up. "We just hired 500 new workers, look at our 6 upcoming projects we're turning into games, don't you see the value? We're too big to fail!"

But they always do. Instead of scrapping the already dying games, they cut our heads off because we're the fall guys. Every company has to downsize at some point, it was just a harmless little mistake, we at Unity bit off more than we could chew. Let's make em' choke on it, no company can exist without a healthy bottom line and you're running out of infantry to fodder.

Kamige Award for best eroge

WINNER: Rance IX

Gahahahahaha! After 9 years of development, Rance IX officially released in English in February 2023.

Fans rejoiced, finally washing the shitty aftertaste that was Rance Quest out of their mouth with something that was actually pretty decent.

After handing the country of Helman their own ass, way back in Rance 3, Rance has now been hired by ex-Prince Patton to travel there and dick down the commie government with his band of outlaws.

Despite the title, the focus is clearly on Patton, with Rance doing what he does best to draw in people who simply saw the title and wanted more of his antics.

With Gameplay influenced, by that I mean completely stolen from one of AliceSoft's earlier titles, Mamatoto, it is rather comparable to the gameplay style of Fire Emblem.

Engaging gameplay, amazing music, fantastic character interactions, and a pretty insane story are what make Patton's game truly the best Eroge of 2023.

1CC Award for best SHMUP game of all time
WINNER: Ikaruga

Ikaruga is the "answer" to the "question" that Radiant Silvergun presented. Cutting down Silvergun's wide variety of weapons to only two: a linear shot and a bomb-style homing laser.

It also adds-nigh invulnerability in swapping shot-polarities, and the game makes you use them all to their fullest.

Ikaruga needs none of the RPG-style grinding, power-ups, customization, and so forth seen in other "innovative" shmups.

It is a true S.T.G. at its core, stripped to the bone and refined to its extreme. Drawing power from the earliest classics and inspiring others that came after it, Ikaruga remains a Treasure for the hardcore gamer.

The same hardcore gamer who asked Radiant Silvergun this question: "Even through all of the developer frustration, retailer manipulation, and outsider protestation: Do you love me?"

Ikaruga answers: "Yes. I do love you."